

REMARKS

In the Office Action mailed December 28, 2006, the Examiner rejected claims 1-5, 9, and 10 under 35 U.S.C § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No 6,777,967 to lino et al. and rejected claims 6-8 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over lino et al. in view of Admitted Prior Art of Fig. 2.

By this reply, Applicants have amended claims 1 and 5 to more appropriately define Applicants' invention. No new matter has been added by this reply.

Applicants respectfully traverse the 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) rejection of claims 1-5, 9, and 10 as being anticipated by lino et al. for at least the reason that lino et al. fails to disclose every claim element. For example, independent claim 1, from which claims 2-4 ultimately depend, recites a combination of steps including applying a voltage to a respective inspection electrodes via pairs of probe pins by drivers connected to the respective pairs of probe pins, thereby causing a fritting phenomenon; and applying an inspection signal from the drivers to the electrodes of a to-be-inspected object, wherein the fritting voltage and the inspection signal are applied via identical signal lines between the drivers of the tester circuit and said first probe pins. Accordingly, fritting voltage and inspection signals are both applied to inspection electrodes by the same signal lines, without requiring the use of separate signal lines from a power source and a test circuit. Moreover, because the drivers and test circuit are both included within the same inspection circuit, separate signal lines for fritting and inspection are not required. lino et al. fails to disclose at least these claim elements.

In contrast, the system of lino et al. uses a fritting control circuit and a test circuit that is not included in the same inspection circuit (See Fig. 2 of lino et al.) and, therefore, do not apply fritting voltage and inspection signals via the same signal lines,

as recited in Applicants' independent claim 1. Thus, lino et al. fails to disclose every claim element of Applicants' independent claim 1, or claims 2-4 that depend therefrom.

Similarly, independent claim 5, from which claims 9 and 10 ultimately depend, recites a combination of elements including drivers of a tester connected to the respective pairs of probe pins via signal lines to simultaneously apply a voltage to the respective electrodes, thereby causing a fritting phenomenon; and a tester which transmits, after the fritting phenomenon occurs, an inspection signal to the electrodes of the to-be-inspected object via the signal lines. As noted above, the system of lino et al. uses separate power control and test circuits coupled to the inspection electrodes via separate signal lines (See Fig. 2 of lino et al.) and, therefore, necessarily do not apply fritting voltage and inspection signals via the same signal lines, as recited in Applicants' independent claim 5. Thus, lino et al. fails to disclose every claim element of Applicants' independent claim 5, or claims 9 and 10 that depend therefrom.

Because lino et al. fails to disclose every claim element of independent claims 1 and 5, or claims 2-4, 9, and 10 that depend therefrom, the 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) rejection of these claims is improper and should be withdrawn.

Applicants respectfully traverse the 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) rejection of claims 6-8 as being unpatentable over lino et al. in view of the Admitted Prior Art of Fig. 2. Each of these claims depends from claim 5. As noted above, lino et al. fails to disclose every claim element of independent claim 5, from which claims 6-8 ultimately depend. The Admitted Prior Art of Fig. 2 does not remedy the deficiencies of lino et al., as described above. Accordingly, the 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) rejection of these claims is improper and should be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

The Office Action contains other characterizations and assertions regarding the claims and the cited art with which Applicants do not necessarily agree. Unless expressly noted otherwise, Applicants decline to subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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